

NEWS FROM ED MARKEY

United States Congress

Massachusetts Seventh District

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MARKEY SLAMS INADEQUATE DRINKING WATER RULES

Congressman Introduces Lead Free Drinking Water Act

Washington, DC: Representative Edward J. Markey (D-MA), a senior member on the House Energy and Commerce Committee and the Resources Committee, today joined other House and Senate lawmakers in introducing the Lead Free Drinking Water Act. Revelations of high lead concentrations in the Washington, D.C. area drinking water initially prompted the legislation and raised concerns about the safety of drinking water nationwide, including in Massachusetts. According to recent press reports, the Boston area drinking water exceeded the national standard of 15 parts per billion (ppb) of lead in 2003. Ten communities in the Boston area, including Everett, Weston, Framingham, Melrose, Medford and Winthrop, must take action to reduce the lead levels in drinking water.

“No American should fear the safety of their tap water, but unfortunately, the danger from lead in drinking water still exists,” said Rep. Markey. “Over the past decade, the Boston area has made progress in reducing lead in drinking water, but federal and state regulators must address the dangerous gap in current regulation that, incredibly, allows harmful lead levels to persist in some homes as long as most homes in the community are in compliance.”

Exposure to lead can lead to delays in physical and mental development in babies and children and to increased blood pressure and kidney problems in adults. EPA estimates that drinking water can make up to 20% of a person’s total exposure to lead.

“Under the current rules, a community’s water can be declared safe even if 10% of the lead tests fail to meet the standard, and there is no requirement to notify the failing households that their drinking water has unhealthy levels of lead. This is unconscionable,” continued Rep. Markey. “When it comes to lead exposure, what you don’t know can hurt you. Our legislation would correct those problems, as well as, ensuring that lead service lines are replaced and that lead free plumbing fixtures really are lead free. It is time, once and for all, to get the lead out.”

The Lead Free Drinking Water Act would amend the Safe Drinking Water Act in the following ways:

- Direct EPA to review and revise the current maximum contaminant level for lead in drinking water.
- Upon violation of the standard, increase the percentage of lead service line replacements to 10% per year until all the lines are replaced.
- Improve public notice and education on lead in drinking water.
- Require that tests are conducted every 6 months on a statistically relevant sample.
- Establish a lead service line replacement fund of \$200 million per year for 2005 to 2009.
- Redefine “lead free” plumbing fixtures as having 0.2% lead, as compared to the currently allowed 8% lead content, and make it illegal to install anything but lead free plumbing fixtures.

Rep. Markey joined Representatives Norton (D-DC), Waxman (D-CA), Fattah (D-PA), Moran (D-VA), Wynn (D-MD), and Solis (D-CA) in introducing the bill in the House. Senators Jeffords (I-VT) and Sarbanes (D-MD) introduced the legislation in the Senate.

Further information can be found at www.house.gov/markey.

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